

**PG&E Master Special Use Renewal Project**  
**Lassen National Forest**  
**Butte, Lassen, Plumas, Shasta and Tehama Counties, California**  
**March 2018**

**Introduction**

The project consists of the Lassen National Forest (LNF) reissuing new powerline authorizations to Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) for the continued operation and maintenance of all their existing electric system facilities located within the LNF that serve local communities.

**Proposed Action**

The Forest Service, Lassen National Forest, proposes to continue authorizing the use and occupancy of National Forest System (NFS) land to PG&E for existing electric system facilities and infrastructure by the issuance of Special Use Authorizations in the form of Master Permits and Easements. The authorizations are proposed for existing facilities within existing alignments. All existing uses will be consolidated into Master Permits and Easements with an attached master Operation and Maintenance Plan (OMP) codifying standard procedures, resource protections and best management practices for all operations and maintenance activities. This action would not authorize any changes to facilities, alignments, or to the capacity of the electric grid. Facilities considered in this analysis have been previously authorized with various special use permits, easements, or statutory rights and are eligible for continuance. Proposed operation and maintenance activities are summarized in Table 1 below and the map of existing electric system facilities is shown in Exhibit A.

Table 1. Summary of Routine Operation and Maintenance

<b><i>Patrols, Inspections, and Minor Repairs</i></b>	<b>Overview</b> - Routine patrols and inspections required for either compliance and/or operations. These activities typically occur at scheduled intervals or as needed and are conducted from authorized roads, on foot, or by helicopter. The Utility may inspect lines as often as deemed necessary. Other regular maintenance activities include minor repairs to the facilities (e.g., poles, fiber optic line, etc.), vegetation management (e.g., pole brushing, line clearing, etc.) in the utility corridor, and road maintenance activities. Class I activities are typically carried out by transmission and distribution line maintenance and vegetation management personnel. Activities may involve disturbance of the ground surface and vegetation within the Utility's rights-of-way and in previously disturbed areas.
<b><i>Emergencies</i></b>	<b>Overview</b> - Emergency work is to address immediate threats to public safety, electric reliability, or property damage. Emergency situations generally result from high winds, storms, wildfires, other natural disasters (e.g., slumps, slides, surface fault ruptures, erosion, major subsidence, earthquakes, and floods), and other accidents that damage the transmission and distribution lines. Emergency repairs may include replacement of downed poles or towers, reconductoring segments of a line, or pulling a new line. An emergency is also considered in instances where a system failure "breakdown" has occurred, as a result of multiple towers, poles, and conductors being down. Repairing the damage requires immediate attention.
<b><i>Routine Operation and Maintenance (O&amp;M)</i></b>	<b>Overview</b> - Routine O&M activities of existing facilities, including replacing existing poles and towers, felling hazard trees, replacing or pulling new conductors, heavy road maintenance and completing minor underground repairs. Activities may involve disturbance of the ground surface and vegetation within the Utility's rights-of-way.

## **Purpose and Need**

The purpose of this project is to continue authorizing the existing PG&E powerlines and associated facilities providing electric services through NFS lands for customers, in a manner consistent with the management requirements of the Lassen National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The project is needed because many of the existing Special Use Authorizations for the powerlines have exceeded their expiration dates. Special Use Authorizations are required for the continued occupancy and use of National Forest System lands by PG&E. The new authorizations would include needed updates to various terms and conditions to meet current land and resource management standards, facilitate more efficient timely electric system operations and maintenance activities with a standardized Operation and Maintenance Plan (OMP) and reduce the existing complexity and administrative burden by consolidating numerous Special Use Authorizations into Master Permits and Easements.

The issuance of these new authorizations would allow PG&E to continue to maintain the grid in a safe and reliable manner while protecting the environment to the fullest extent practical. The likelihood of power outages and wildfires caused by downed lines when hazard trees strike them or when degraded power poles fail is reduced when maintenance activities are completed in a timely and sound manner. PG&E is required to maintain the grid to standards and be in compliance with several state and federal laws and regulations.

Included in, and fundamental to, updating the Special Use Authorizations, is the need to improve the OMP. The OMP is necessary to establish standard operating procedures and protocols for conducting routine maintenance activities. It ensures that PG&E facilities are continually maintained in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) requirements, while continually managing and mitigating effects to plants, animals, aquatic features, endangered species habitats, areas of resource concern, or any other area of potential effect.

The Forest Service recognizes the importance of electric system infrastructure and the key role that NFS lands play in providing electric service to the public.

## **Decision to be Made**

The decision to be made is whether to implement this project as proposed, as modified to address public concerns, or not at all.